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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of career unhappiness among academic professionals and ways academics cope with this problem. Various signs and symptoms of career blockage are discussed such as dissonance and disillusionment in the job, the non-realization of gender-specific expectations, and the feeling of career plateauing. Four stages of the regenerative process are discussed. These stages are: (1) awareness of internal dissonance and professional disorientation; (2) examination of values, attitudes, and options; (3) selection of a course of action and acquisition of needed knowledge and skills; and (4) internalization of a different role perspective. Areas of faculty development whereby faculty can learn more about and act upon their professional goals, attitudes, and competencies are examined next. It is noted that the way colleges and universities are organized and function has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of faculty efforts to meet renewal needs. Finally, questions are provided to assist in creating the professional/personal development program and for guiding the regenerative process. Contains six references. (GLR)

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Work is an important part of life for most people. Besides providing the sustenance for living, work serves other social and psychological needs (Sarason 1977). A passing conversation with friends, for example, seldom is concluded without discussion of work. Our identities are often intertwined with the work we do. Family members must adapt to work schedules; where we live often is the result of our work. Of course, all of this is as true for professionals as for any other group of workers. However, work takes on additional meaning for some who have carefully selected their vocation and have spent long periods of their life preparing for their work. For many professionals, work is a form of self-expression, an extension of their being, even their personalities. Personal expression is limited and lives are affected when work and the professional are out of sync.

Academic professionals are not immune to the feelings most professionals share, even though they are well educated, talented and versatile. When work expectations of professors dramatically differ from reality on the job, results of their work may become less expressive and not a true representation of their competence. Dissatisfied professors are the result of academic work that lacks the opportunity for true self-expression. All of the reasons professors give for being attracted to their work can be causes for dissatisfaction when elements are absent. Lack of intellectual stimulation, lack of challenging students and/or colleagues, a research agenda that seems to have no future, or simply a tarnished image of the profession, all can be sources of disillusionment. When any of these are present in the professional lives of professors, resolution is required for continued effectiveness of teacher/scholars.

Many professors successfully find resolution through renewal by making alterations, such as asking for a new teaching assignment, trying a different research emphasis, or by accepting another position at a different institution. Because of less hospitable surroundings or inflexible work conditions, others are not so fortunate; without assistance, renewal may not be possible.

Events that cause dissonance in the professional can lead to disorientation and the possibility of alienation from the professorate altogether. Two critical times in the lives of professors are upon entering the career and at mid-career. These are times when dissonance leading to disorientation is most likely

to occur. Some professors require assistance to resolve the inevitable tensions and conflicts that instigate need for transitions in their professional lives. Besides receiving support from family, friends, and the institution, professors must learn how to renew themselves through the process of regenerative learning (Simpson 1990).

Signs and Symptoms of Career Blockage

Dissonance and disillusionment in the job which lead to professional disorientation are some of the signs and symptoms of career malaise. In addition, an individual's lack of awareness about how personal goals and the mission of his or her institution mesh is an indication of career blockage that may result in career malaise. Also related to lack of sensitivity to personal and institutional goals is inability of an individual faculty member to anticipate their future working at his/her institution.

Two other signs and symptoms of academic career malaise may be attributed to gender specific expectations or to a feeling of plateauing in one's career. It is becoming clearer through gender research that women and men faculty differ in their expectations of academic career and what is fulfilling in academic work (Simpson 1991). These differences must be addressed when coping with academic career malaise.

Feelings of plateauing in one's work may be the result of feelings of not being able to advance any further in the job (structural plateauing); feelings of having learned all there is to learn about a job (content plateauing); or being totally absorbed with the job, which Bardwick (1986) refers to as life plateauing. Feelings of plateauing are natural and to be expected. Often the feelings are temporary, but unless these feelings and their causes are understood by faculty who are experiencing the feelings, blockage and malaise may be devastating to a faculty member's career.

Stages of the Regenerative Process

The regenerative learning process develops in four stages: (1) awareness of internal dissonance and professional disorientation, (2) examination of values, attitudes and options, (3) selection of a course of action and acquisition of needed knowledge and skills, and (4) internalization of a different role perspective (see Figure 3.1).

The first stage of the process of renewal begins with internal dissonance with regard to one's professional goals and/or direction. This could happen shortly after taking the first academic job, or at the point of settling in to any new academic

position along the career path. It can begin when the faculty member discovers what he or she expected to be the nature of the academic work does not match institutional demands. Feelings of dissonance most often occur in the middle of one's career, after all major career goals seem to be achieved. At this point the faculty member may be secretly saying "Is this all there is?" "Am I looking forward to the future in this position?" or "How should I be spending X number of years until retirement?" Stage I also includes self-realization and self-examination by the individual faculty member.

Another part of the first stage of regenerative learning is professional disorientation, even to the point of alienation from the expected professional role. This may involve sharing feelings and learning from colleagues who have experienced similar dissonance. Shared dialogue with peers provides the faculty member a point of comparison about his or her feelings and experiences. Comparison information is used in the next stage of the process.

In Stage Two of regenerative learning, the faculty member examines personal attitudes and values along with those held by the institution and the academic community at large. Clarification of personal values is the result of this phase. It is essential that the faculty member describe the clearest picture of personal feelings and reality of working within the institution. Following a self-examination of values comes an exploration of options for role redefinition. The second stage also includes enunciation of competencies and development of self-confidence to redefine or recreate one's role within the college or university. During this phase the faculty member may address such questions as "What role should I prepare for and/or seek in the next one to three years?" and "With my abilities, experiences and institutional options, to what academic role am I best suited?"

Stage Three is a period of personal decision-making. The regenerative learning model provides a series of questions designed to facilitate the process of self-evaluation and values clarification from which new professional goals can emerge. At this point, a commitment is made to acquire or develop further the knowledge and skills needed to pursue a specific course of action leading to these goals.

The outcome of Stage Three should be a plan of action that will result in a different professional role perspective, hopefully one that will resolve the perceived conflicts between personal and institutional expectations.

Internalization of the different role is the final stage. This stage includes risk-taking and reintegration of previously acquired knowledge and skills with new. Patience and adequate time for internalization of the different role is required. Internalization does not happen quickly, as a rule. Although the faculty member may readily accept the responsibilities of a new work routine, role recreation or redefinition takes longer.

Programmatic Application of Regenerative Learning

A number of books have described state-of-the-art concepts and practices of faculty development. Notably, Gaff (1975), and Bergquist, Philips and Quehl (1975) established a comprehensive and useful taxonomy by which to analyze and discuss development aspects within the institution. Gaff classified faculty development practices into (1) faculty development - programs to promote faculty growth through acquisition of knowledge, skills and affective dimensions; (2) instructional development - programs to enhance student learning, materials preparation and course development; and (3) organizational development - programs to create effective environments for teaching and learning within the institution. Bergquist et al. added (4) curriculum development - programs to initiate and support curricular revision and development. Obviously, activities used in the application of these categories overlap; however, the taxonomy is helpful in understanding distinctive avenues for renewal from the institutional perspective.

As the practice of faculty development has grown and expanded in its service to faculty, the parameters of development among faculty appear to have expanded in to two unique, but very much interrelated emphases that reflect current faculty renewal needs - professional growth and personal growth. The three major avenues of renewal within the institution have been conceptualized for the purpose of this discussion as, Personal/Professional Development, Instructional/Curriculum Development, and Organizational Development.

The utilization of the three development areas to faculty renewal are represented in Figure 3.2. The most effective institutional climate is one in which the individual faculty member is at the center of planning. Through these avenues of development, faculty members interpret and respond to personal needs and expectations of the institution and larger academic community. These areas serve as conduits through which faculty can learn more about and act upon their professional goals, attitudes, and competencies. Renewal activities are a means to review professional ambitions in light of present reality with the purpose of constructing a more dynamic perspective on academic work.

It is also important to realize that any of the three avenues may be more or less important in assisting individual faculty members, depending upon how they view their needs and see themselves in relation to these areas. Type and mission of the institution served, for example, is important, since institutional image is very much related to how faculty members view themselves. Developmental activities that are renewing help the faculty member put into context the importance and meaning of the various avenues of growth.

Sensitivity of Department Chairs

It is assumed that renewal must begin with the individual. An organization cannot impose renewal. The way colleges and universities are organized and function, however, has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of faculty efforts to meet renewal needs. Department or division chairs are the key individuals in the institutional organization. They are typically at the center of instructional matters, curriculum development, and personnel decisions on most campuses. Because of their critical position in the mainstream of operations within the college or university, department or division chairs have the opportunity to recognize faculty need and support renewal efforts. Chairs can be sensitive to dissonance and disorientation among the faculty. They may have the best vantage point on day-to-day victories and disappointments experienced by faculty. Success faculty members have in handling transition periods that occur in academic careers is critically influenced by how chairs respond at the initial stages of disillusionment and disorientation. Since most chairs are appointed first for their leadership as academicians, they may not be prepared with the essential sensitivities and skills to assist faculty in their renewal. Providing orientation and assistance concerning renewal to department chairs as needed, therefore, is fundamental to planning effective faculty renewal programs.

A series of questions can initiate the regenerative process and help faculty members examine, clarify and reconstruct a personally meaningful academic perspective. Administrators, faculty developers, career counselors, mentors, and colleagues can all contribute to and support the process. The following series of questions in each of the three development areas can be used as examples for initiating and guiding regenerative learning.

Guiding Regenerative Questions

Professional/Personal Development

1. Is the scholar responsible only for discovering and disseminating truth? How do I feel about that? (HDIFAT?)

2. What relationship does my work have to my life outside the college or university? (HDIFAT?)

3. What professional activities give me most satisfaction? (HDIFAT?)

4. What personal attitudes enhance my chances or stand in the way of my doing what I want as a professional?

5. If I could choose, how would I change my job tomorrow?

6. What will it take to reach my personal/professional goals at this institution?

Instructional and Curriculum Development

1. Do I consider students recipients or partners in the educational process?

2. Do I feel involved with curriculum changes and revision in my role as professor here at _____? Why or why not? (HDIFAT?)

3. What is the most satisfying part of teaching?

4. What is more satisfying to me - finishing a good lecture or seeing an article of mine in print? (HDIFAT?)

5. What part does the curriculum play in insuring a quality education for students? (HDIFAT?)

6. If I could change my teaching, service or research responsibilities tomorrow, what would I do?

7. If I had the choice, what would I add to the curriculum? Why?

8. How can I develop or teach courses that interest me?

Organizational Development

1. How is the organization of the college or university conducive to my work?

2. What organizational support have I not used that I would like to use?

3. Who provides me with the most assistance within the institution? (HDIFAT?)

4. If I had a choice, what organizational changes would I make to help me in my work? Why?

5. How willing am I to use institutional support for my development?

6. What can I do to influence or better use the college/university organizational network to satisfy my professional needs?

Reconstructing Role Perspective

Causes of career blockage and malaise often associated with it may vary according to institutional setting. Community college faculty might be expected to place greater emphasis on instruction and sense greater need for assistance there. Instruction and provision of service to the community is stressed in the mission of most institutions of this type. Research typically is expected to be lower in priority for community college professors. The regenerative learning process can provide a mirror for community college instructors to view themselves and to accept their greater interest in teaching as being professionally desirable. Or, they may realize the nature of the research they are doing is very much suited to their professional goals, and thus become more enthusiastic about research.

Through the same regenerative process, research university professors may realize that curriculum planning or innovative instructional delivery methods are activities in which they may gain satisfaction. Planning for new courses or ways of teaching may satisfy a creative bent that has lain dormant. Recognition through deliberate examination, clarification, and reordering of their personal needs and those of their department can produce new views of what curriculum should be. The process may result in new courses that are personally stimulating, or perhaps collaborative efforts with colleagues to deliver traditionally assumed content in new ways.

Ultimately, the process addresses career malaise through a role redefinition and a greater sense of empowerment. It capitalizes on utilization of the total institution, and realizes the individual human potential of the faculty member as well as the potential of the institution. The model of regenerative learning assumes that renewal occurs through redefinition of the professor's world of work - the academic job - resulting in a new role perspective. By gaining a new role perspective - a new view, one that is more positive, regenerative learning opens the way to constructively deal with the bumps and detours in academic career journeys, resulting in more professional vigor.

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Stage I Dissonance Awareness and Professional Disorientation	Stage II Exploration of Values, Competencies and Options— Reconstruction of Role	Stage III Course of Action and Acquisition of Needed Knowledge and Skill	Stage IV Internalization of New Perspective and Role Integration
• Can I describe my professional goals? If not, why? • What feelings do I have about my job now? • Why did I choose to be a professor? • What feelings do I have about conflicts between what I want to do and what is expected? • If I spent the next 5 years in this role as I have the last 5, would I be satisfied? Why?	• How do I view what the college or university expects of me? • What, if anything, do I want to do better? • Which of my abilities and skills do I find most satisfying? Why? • What excites me about my work? Why? • What turns me off? Why? • What would I like to be doing here in the next 5 years? • What have I not attempted in my work that I want to try?	• What activities I do serve my personal needs? • Which activities largely serve needs of the institution? • What do I feel most confident doing now? • What do I need to be able to do? • What skills and/or knowledge bases do I want to acquire to assume a different role?	• What am I willing to try to fulfill my needs? • How do I feel about my decision to pursue a different role in the college or university? • Do my competencies match the new role expectations? • How confident am I in the new role? • If not, what more do I need to do to feel confident?

Figure 3.1 The Regenerative Learning Model

Simpson, E. (1990). Faculty Renewal in Higher Education, Krieger Publications, Malabar, FL.

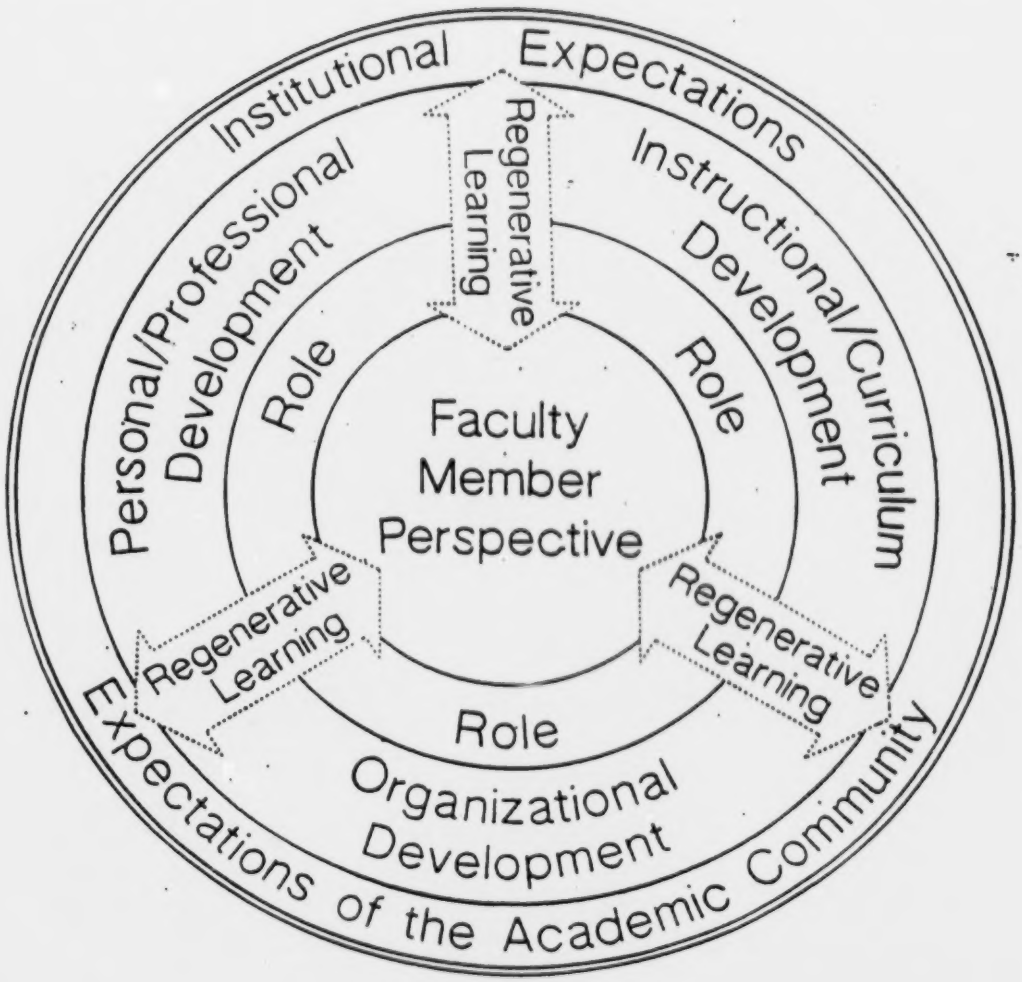

Figure 3.2 Role of Regenerative Learning in Faculty Renewal